

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
SMARTER NIAGARA STEERING COMMITTEE

REPORT 6-2008

Minutes of a meeting of the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee held on Wednesday, July 9, 2008 commencing at 5:10 p.m. in Council Chambers, Regional Municipal Building, Thorold, Ontario.

ATTENDANCE

Committee: Councillors Gabriel, Chair; Greenwood; Messrs. Alexander, Barr, Chrystian, Halverson, Lundrigan, Phillips, Ms. Dale Shipley, Ms. Landry, Ms. Szockyj, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Wiens.

Staff: Mr. Brothers, Commissioner Public Works, Mr. Gummo, Associate Director, Comprehensive Community Planning; Ms. Emeneau, Planner; Ms. Ricci, Legislative Assistant.

Working Group: Mr. Slepkov, Ms. German.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

32. Smarter Niagara Steering Committee – June 18, 2008
Report 5-2008

Moved by Ms. Stewart
Seconded by Mr. Lundrigan

That the minutes of the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee meeting of June 18, 2008, be approved.

Carried

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

33. Niagara 2031 – The 3 Growth Options

Ms. Emeneau thanked Committee members for their attendance and stated that the meetings main goal was to answer or provide input on the following three questions:

- Which of the three options would you recommend that Council endorse? Why? Please explain in relation to the Evaluation Criteria.

- If you would recommend none of the three, what is the alternative that you would recommend? Why? Please explain in relation to the Evaluation Criteria.
- Do you have any suggestions to improve the Evaluation Criteria?

She then proceeded to provide Committee members with a presentation respecting the Region of Niagara Growth Management Strategy; she stated that this was an abbreviated version of the presentation (May 7, 2008) previously provided by Dillon Consulting Limited.

Ms. Emeneau quickly reviewed the three Growth Options for Niagara; Option A: Current Trends, Option B: Grow South and Option C: Multi-Nodal.

Mr. Gummo continued by presenting the Region of Niagara Growth Management Strategy Phase 3 – Range of Options Evaluation Table. He advised Committee members that this “draft” document was provided by Dillon Consulting Limited and Watson & Associates.

Committee members ventured into a discussion and requested that the following clarifications, questions, and statements be captured:

- What were the differences in content between the July 2nd edition of this document and the July 8th edition offered this evening?
 - Improved numbers in infrastructure costs; doesn't affect overall scoring
- Option B; isn't this more of a corridor development (St. Catharines to Port Colborne). If so, the name “Grow South” indicates “All South” but really it is more linear.
 - Suggestion made to change the name, so that communities affected don't count themselves out
- Categories are mostly “quantity” not “quality”
 - The strategy must improve health, economic development, transportation etc.,
- Scenarios; Niagara is rural and urban and this is not reflected in Options
- Aspect of Food is not discussed within Options; need to make food more accessible (15 minute walk)
- Capital side: Water and Wastewater (all options are the same in criteria)
 - If there are no numbers attached to hard infrastructure; how do you measure?

- 2nd Option is great; but it doesn't promote fiscal health and environmental health
- Primary concern for Option B: growth into Northern municipalities would simply turn back to Hamilton
- Grimsby discussion/meeting: if the Region focuses is on the three main municipalities (St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland), then Grimsby can concentrate on their existing lands internally, and create walkable community
- Last two pages bear the most weight for discussion:
 - Consider fiscal health and market realization
 - Some people don't want to live here – what do we need to do to attract them?
 - Create walkable communities
 - Continue to accelerate projects
 - Heavy lifting needs to happen in the first few years after the GMS is adopted
 - Take the pressure off tender fruit lands and easily developed areas (e.g. using best land for food production)
 - Footnote 7; LEEDS is not the only Building Standard; we need to develop a tool box
 - Hold discussion with local Treasurer's and Engineers
- Page 17: Sustainability
 - Why is this the only time "sustainability" is mentioned?
 - It needs to be broken down into its four components to properly assess the three options
 - "sustainability" needs to be left out of this measure
- Market realization; what is meant by this?
 - Historic pattern; Option B must redirect market forces in different geographic direction
 - Is market likely to respond negatively or positively?
 - Think carefully because there is a significant built in investment
- Challenge; west end residents work in GTA area but they live in Grimsby and Beamsville.
 - Would they be willing to live in Welland and work in GTA?
- "Need to live and work in same area"

- Page 3; higher intensification target?
 - Housing affordability is hard to measure, almost a wash no matter which Option you use
 - Preferred option needs to contain appropriate housing mix
 - Affordability (impacts / subsidies / size of units)
 - Distribution of high, medium and low densities needs to be reflected
- “Our Future is right around the corner”
 - No, we need to focus now
- Focus “residential growth” and “employment growth”
 - Does evaluation chart include these components or just housing and residential?

At this point in the meeting Mr. Gummo called for Committee members to ask, discuss and answer the questions provided at the meetings commencement.

Prior to offering opinions Committee members asked that Mr. Gummo provide a timeline; he offered the following outline:

- End of August deadline for comments on Phase 3
- Summarize discussions of SNSC (July 9th & 30th); identify preferred option and submit to consultants
- Early October; seek Council’s Preferred Option
- End Phase 4
- Launch Phase 5 (follow up strategies, use of incentives to support strategies, Regional Policy Plan amendment, update infrastructure plan, etc.)

The following summarizes, in part, the discussion surrounding the Committee members “preferred” Option:

- None of the Options: are preferable
 - Community Health and Social Services not considered
 - Health; mainly obesity, we’re above average for Ontario
 - Economic status; we’re below average
 - Literacy low
 - Transportation not considered
 - Municipal Parks and Recreation not strong enough; although unsure of what indicators to put in place

- Option B: preferred
 - Major corridor will attract businesses which will heighten economic feasibility (attract industry)
 - Corridor increases potential for walkable communities
 - Gas Prices; Niagara Falls is vulnerable if the corridor creates transportation you can possibly help protect tourism and it may also take the pressure off Gateway points

- Option B: Grow South; preferred
 - Call it North/South Option or Transportation Option
 - transportation costs will increase, less oil to go around, de-suburbanization, carbon reduction; all things that may become National priority
 - Potential for good; do further and deeper analysis into the area of affordable housing and transportation

- Option C: strong inclination to prefer
 - Fits with appeal to be creative
 - strength of Ridgeway; surrounded by rural
 - strength of St. Anne's; surrounded by rural
 - strength of St. Catharine's; surrounded by rural
 - Play to our strengths
 - Work on "quality" neighbourhoods; show strong injection or bias towards quality (reflect this in the numbers)
 - Focus on neighbourhoods is important

- Option C: or merge of B & C
 - Realistic with market currently in existence
 - Growth pattern is coming from West; but growth will come from GTA and Hamilton
 - Practicality of Option B in its entirety doesn't make sense
 - Strategy can "say" this is what is going to happen; but it doesn't mean that it will happen
 - Neighbourhoods: are important
 - Walkable, design, density (all can be achieved through individual land application and criteria)
 - Region can incorporate Policy process that allows you to achieve this criteria (be consistent in its application)

- Option A: No.

- Hybrid of Option B and C: preferred
 - The spider chart tells us of a lot of work will be needed with the “Fiscal” and “Market” considerations related to Option B; change how we do business, what are the implications?
 - Some elements of Option C are preferred
- Option A: absolutely not
- Option B: best to facilitate
 - City Centre redevelopment, supports intensification and infilling
 - Need more time to go through
 - Use this evening to digest information; bring more to the July 30th meeting
 - In support of changing the name of Option B
 - Some scenario’s missing:
 - Housing mix; same percentages
 - Affect on carbon footprint analysis – more medium and high density needed
 - From an environmental perspective; unacceptable
 - Consider a totally different scenario
- Note in Criteria:
 - “transportation modeling information not available”; encourage completing and in depth analysis
- Option A: No --- Merge of B and C or a 4th Option: preferred
 - Tonight has been valuable in separating opinions respecting the 3 Growth Options
 - “Growth South” or “Grow South” in document; be consistent throughout material
- None preferred
 - Options do not address community health; Social Services need to be stronger (ie. Very well)
 - Physical activity health
 - Economic / poverty (access)
 - kms 1.5 walkability to recreation
 - Seniors growth; walkable communities
 - More value on well being index

- Options need to address common interest not special
 - Interest of the car:
 - Seniors/ not driving = walkable communities
 - Economics = not everybody can afford a car
 - Physical Activity = need to obtain steps / day
 - Improvements:
 - Intelligence / assumptions
 - If from a planning research perspective; too much research in big cities (Vancouver, Boston, Toronto, Seattle)
 - If from Health; little understanding of social, recreation
 - Ensure recreation / transportation / health / planning collaborative research
 - Add food in ecological criteria
- Option B: most acceptable of the 3
 - Alternative:
 - Suggest adding in a dedicated public transit spine and having the tools to become carbon neutral (Melbourne Principles, Natural Step, LEED, etc.,)
 - Improvement:
 - What is the “will power” to stick to a plan and enforce compact growth?
 - Use natural step as the tool to create and implement this initiative.
 - Innovation and entrepreneurship are key factors in being successful
- “don’t promote development that generates capital costs!”; “diverse walkable neighbourhoods don’t do that.”

Mr. Ken Brothers stated that he too had concerns respecting:

- Peak Oil
 - Where are we going?
 - What’s the impact?
- Building New
 - Existing projects?
 - Why spend a Billion dollars; new projects?

- Growth
 - Residential growth never pays for itself; is this what we want?
 - Capacity allocation; developers will develop on the cheapest land
- Wainfleet Servicing
 - Does it change allocation?
- Demographic Shift
 - Feed jobs
 - Provide livable communities
- Green foot print
- Portability

Mr. David Alexander supplied Committee members with the following website:

- www.passionforsustainability.com

In closing Mr. Brothers offered that we have a great community; we just need to sustain it.

Committee members were in agreement that the Public Works Division needs to be involved or this exercise has been in vain.

Following the above discussion it was:

Moved by Ms. Stewart
Seconded by Ms. Shipley

That the aforementioned meeting notes respecting Niagara 2031 – The 3 Growth Options, be received for information; and

That the meeting notes be forwarded to members of the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee members prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Carried.

UPDATE

34. **Smarter Niagara Education and
Communication Working Group (SNECWG)**

Ms. Landry provided Committee members with a brief synopsis of the SNECWG May 28, 2008 meeting.

A discussion respecting the Working Group's mandate was reiterated and a decision was made to move forward with providing input to Niagara Economic Development Commission (NEDC) for development of a Smarter Niagara section on the newly developed NEDC website.

The following overview of recommendations, thus far, was also provided:

- Incorporate a SNSC members only section:
 - Include a blogging section
 - Post publications
- Incorporate a section for Municipal Mayors and Councillors
- Blogging section for the public to encourage public dialogue about smart growth
- Smart Growth Principles section to include a checklist titled: 100 Policies for Implementation (permission received)
- Quality Design section
 - Define what we are looking for in this area
- Quality of Life section
 - Requires a definition to focus the topic area
- Smart Growth and Health
 - Should this be a separate section or captured under Quality of Life?

Moved by Mr. Lundrigan
Seconded by Ms. Wiens

That the Oral Update respecting the Smarter Niagara Education and Communication Working Group (SNECWG) be received for information.

Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

35. Correspondence Summary

Moved by Councillor Greenwood
Seconded by Mr. Halverson

That the following communications listed in the Smarter Niagara Steering Committee Correspondence Summary dated July 9, 2008, be received for information.

SG 42-2008 New Urban News – June 2008

SG 43-2008 An article entitled "Councillor pushes for downtown tourist area designation," St. Catharines Standard, June 24, 2008

Carried.

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned at 7:10 p.m. to meet again July 30, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. in Committee Room 4.

Robert Gabriel
Chair

Lisa Ricci
Legislative Assistant